

# DANCE PROGRAM

## BalletX at Longwood Gardens

### June 17, 2026

# HONEY

## BALLETX PREMIERE 2022

**CHOREOGRAPHER:** Jamar Roberts

**MUSIC:** *How Deep Is the Ocean (How Deep Is The Sky); I Cried For You; Don't Worry 'Bout Me; This Nearly Was Mine* by Don Shirley

**LIGHTING DESIGNER:** Michael Korsch

**LIGHTING SUPERVISOR:** Sasha Anistratova

**COSTUME DESIGNER:** Mark Eric

**DANCERS:** Eli Alford, Itzkan Barbosa, Francesca Forcella, Jared Kelly, Jerard Palazo, Ashley Simpson

*Honey - A term of endearment used to express love or affection. Honey features three duets set to the beautifully decadent music of legendary pianist, Don Shirley, this work takes us on a journey from the fierce passion of young love, through the manipulative power plays of relationship dynamics, and ends with an aspirational love. One that has stood the test of time, balanced and mature. Though at different stages on their quest for companionship, all three vignettes concisely speak to the complexity of the human heart and our never-ending quest for love and human connection.*

# MACARONI

## BALLETX PREMIERE 2024

**CHOREOGRAPHER:** Loughlan Prior

**COMPOSER:** Claire Cowan

**MUSIC:** *Macaroni*, an original composition by Claire Cowan

**LIGHTING DESIGNER:** Michael Korsch

**LIGHTING SUPERVISOR:** Sasha Anistratova

**COSTUME DESIGNER:** Emma Kingsbury

**COSTUME CONSTRUCTION:** Aaron Keppel-Three Bay Barn (Wiglets & Wig); Colin Davis Jones Studio (Unitards); Esther Lofley (Jackets); Peggy Jackson and Sky Printing NYC (Graphics & Printing)

**DANCERS:** Eli Alford, Itzkan Barbosa, Francesca Forcella, Skyler Lubin, Jonathan Montepara, Jerard Palazo, Ben Schwarz, Ashley Simpson

*In the late 18th century, to call someone a "Macaroni" was to connect them to an effeminate character, ripe for ridicule. The patriotic anthem, Yankee Doodle Dandy, was first devised as an insulting ditty, with its queer-phobic origins satirising the gender bending styles of flamboyant society. In this new work, BalletX shines a light on a little known part of queer history, combining layers of camp humour with poignant storytelling and reclaimed pride.*

INTERMISSION

# BIG WIG

## BALLETX PREMIERE 2024

**CHOREOGRAPHER:** Marguerite Donlon

**COMPOSER & MUSIC DIRECTOR:** Paul Calderone

**MUSIC:** Original Composition by Paul Calderone; *My Lagan Love* by The Chieftains; *An Buachail Caol Dubh* by Iarla Ó Lionáird; *Astral* by Popof and Mauro Somm; *Ríleanna / Reels: Ormond Sound, The Torn Jacket* by Muireann Nic Amhlaóibh; *Sadhb Ni Beruinnealadh* by Liam O'Maonlai

**LIGHTING DESIGNER:** Michael Korsch

**LIGHTING SUPERVISOR:** Sasha Anistratova

**COSTUME DESIGNER:** Silke Fischer

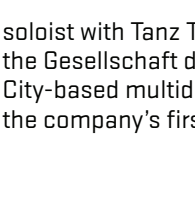
**DANCERS:** Eli Alford, Itzkan Barbosa, Francesca Forcella, Savannah Green, Jared Kelly, Eileen Kim, Skyler Lubin, Jonathan Montepara, Jerard Palazo, Minori Sakita, Ben Schwarz, João Pedro Silva, Ashley Simpson, Peter Weil

*In Big Wig, I journey back to my childhood in Ireland, where the lively footwork of Irish dance met the stillness of a restricted upper body—an effect accentuated by the bold, curly wigs of the 1980s. This limitation in movement eventually led me to ballet, and later, to the expansive world of contemporary dance. As a choreographer, I blend these forms, inviting dancers to explore a language that honors both structure and freedom. With BalletX's incredible artists, we built a movement "dictionary" for Big Wig, capturing gestures that speak to the complexity of tradition, the present, and glimpses of the future. Returning to my roots, I found again that uniquely Irish mix of humor and melancholy that flows through each moment. Big Wig is a slice of life—colorful, whimsical, and bold. It's a celebration of tradition, transformation, and the joy of imaginative play, where wigs become symbols of dance's evolving spirit.*

# BalletX Philadelphia's premier contemporary ballet, has forged powerful new works for two decades under Artistic & Executive Director Christine Cox.

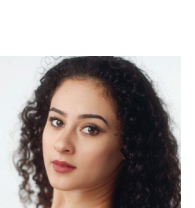
With 150 world premieres by over 80 choreographers, the company is hailed by The New York Times as "among America's best." BalletX blends innovation and excellence to tell today's stories with athleticism, emotion, and grace on stages including The Kennedy Center, Vail Dance Festival, and Festival des Arts de Saint-Sauveur in Quebec, and through community programs that make ballet vibrant, inclusive, and unforgettable.

[balletx.org](http://balletx.org)



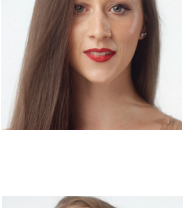
### ARTISTIC & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR **CHRISTINE COX**

Christine Cox co-founded BalletX, Philadelphia's premier contemporary ballet, with Matthew Neenan in 2005. Under her leadership as Artistic & Executive Director, the BalletX team has produced 150 world premiere ballets by over 80 renowned and emerging choreographers from around the world. Throughout her tenure, Cox has committed BalletX to expanding dance's vocabulary for all audiences, promoting initiatives that make contemporary ballet accessible and welcoming. In 2015 she launched BalletX's community Pop-Up program with funding from the Knight Foundation, bringing free performances to neighborhoods across Philadelphia. Through BalletX's Dance eXchange education program, she has partnered with elementary schools throughout the Philadelphia School District to emphasize dance as a means to promote self-confidence and acquire valuable life skills, reaching more than 4,000 local students. In December 2016 Cox led a TEDx Talk at the George School about innovation in the field of contemporary ballet, and in February 2023 Cox led a discussion with Harvard University's Harvard Dance Center on leadership in the arts. Cox has received distinguished fellowships from the Independence Foundation and Pennsylvania Council on the Arts and is the recipient of Avenger of the Arts' 2022 "Visionary Award" and the Philadelphia Citizen's 2025 "Innovator of the Year" Award. She is the proud mother of Warren and Wesley Miller.



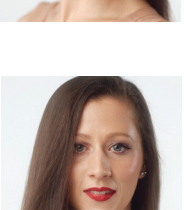
### ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR **TARA KEATING**

Tara Keating began her training at the Pioneer Valley Ballet in Northampton, MA. She then attended The Juilliard School, under the direction of Benjamin Harkavy, where she received a BFA in Dance. While there, she was awarded the Jerome L. Greene Fellowship and the Most Outstanding Dance Major by the National Dance Association. She danced professionally with American Repertory Ballet, "Tharp!" and as a soloist with the Pennsylvania Ballet. In 2005 she became a founding member of BalletX, and was named Associate Artistic Director in 2014.



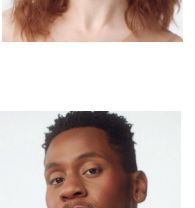
### REHEARSAL DIRECTOR & COMMUNITY LIAISON **KEELAN WHITMORE**

Keelan Whitmore, a native of Rockford, IL, trained at Rockford Dance Company, Joffrey Ballet School/New School University, Interlochen Arts Academy, and St. Mary's College, where he received his BA in Dance. He danced with the Kansas City Ballet, Suzanne Farrell Ballet, Alonzo King LINES Ballet, and as a soloist with Tanz Theater Münster, where he was awarded 2019 Outstanding Artist by the Gesellschaft der Musik- und Theaterfreunde. In 2006 he co-founded the Kansas City-based multidisciplinary ensemble Quixotic Fusion. In 2023 he joined BalletX as the company's first Rehearsal Director & Community Liaison.



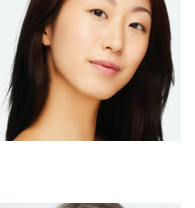
### DANCER **ELI ALFORD**

received his BFA in dance from the USC Glorya Kaufman School of Dance under the direction of Jodie Gates and William Forsythe, where he learned and performed with Jerome L. Naharin, Jiri Kylian, Justin Peck, Merce Cunningham, and Dwight Rhoden to name a few. Eli joined BalletX in 2022.



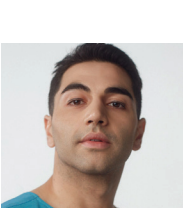
### DANCER **ITZKAN BARBOSA**

danced with Miami City Ballet and NY Theater Ballet, where she performed works by Balanchine, Jerome Robbins, Antony Tudor, and more. She also performs contemporary and aerial dance with Dzul Dance and is a Principal Artist with Verzola Ballet. Itzkan joined BalletX in 2023.



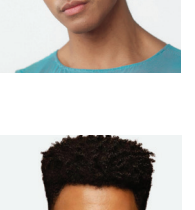
### DANCER **FRANCESCA FORCELLA**

danced with the Washington Ballet Studio Company, Los Angeles American Contemporary Ballet, and Houston Ballet II, where she toured internationally, representing Houston Ballet at the International Youth Dance Festival in Budapest, Hungary. Francesca joined BalletX in 2013.



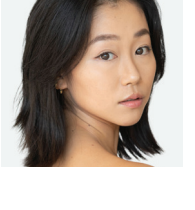
### DANCER **SAVANNAH GREEN**

studied at Manhattan Youth Ballet and LaGuardia High School for the Performing Arts. She graduated with a BFA from the University of California, Santa Barbara, in 2017, performing works by Jose Limon, Andrea Miller, and Anna Halprin. Savannah joined BalletX in 2020.



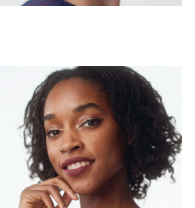
### DANCER **LANIE JACKSON**

danced with Ballet Virginia after graduating from The Juilliard School where she performed works with William Forsythe, Andrea Miller, James B. Whiteside, and Matthew Neenan, and participated in residencies with Ohad Naharin of BatSheva Dance Company. Lanie joined BalletX in 2023.



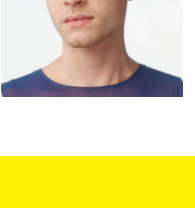
### DANCER **JARED KELLY**

trained at The Washington School of Ballet, Baltimore School for the Arts, and Indiana University Ballet Theatre, where he graduated with a BS in Ballet. Jared has performed works by George Balanchine, Martha Graham, Jerome Robbins, Twyla Tharp, and Paul Taylor, among others. Jared joined BalletX in 2022.



### DANCER **EILEEN KIM**

received her BFA in dance from the USC Glorya Kaufman School of Dance and danced with the Universal Ballet in Seoul, South Korea, and Cincinnati Ballet. Eileen performed featured roles by George Balanchine, Justin Peck, Jiri Kylian, and Kyle Abraham, among others. Eileen joined BalletX in 2024.



### DANCER **SKYLER LUBIN**

danced as a member of the Corps de Ballet with Miami City Ballet from 2010-2014. She has performed featured roles including *Flower Festival pas de deux*, *Swan Lake pas de trois*, and Jerome Robbins' *Afternoon of a Faun*, and has premiered pieces by Alexei Ratmansky and Liam Scarlett. Skyler joined BalletX in 2015.



### DANCER **JONATHAN MONTEPARA**

from Orsogna (Italy), graduated from the Balletto di Roma. He danced for American Ballet Theatre, and as well with Ethan Stiefel, Amy Hall Garner, Loughlan Prior, Jennifer Archibald, Matthew Neenan, Jamar Roberts, Caili Quan, and other international artists. Jonathan joined BalletX in 2022.



### DANCER **JERARD PALAZO**

studied at the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Ailey School Professional Division, Toronto Dance Theatre, Ballet School, Jacob's Pillow Contemporary Program, and Nederlands Dans Theatre. He has worked with Nai Ni Chen Dance Company, Peridance Company, and Lavagnino Dance. Jerard joined BalletX in 2022.



### DANCER **JOÃO PEDRO SILVA**

is a Brazilian dancer with a Distinction in the Royal Academy of Dance's performance ballet examinations. A Jacob's Pillow alumnus, he has performed leading roles in *Chroma* by Wayne McGregor, *Gnawa* by Nacho Duato, and the title role in George Balanchine's *Prodigal Son*. João joined BalletX in 2025.



### DANCER **MINORI SAKITA**

trained at the Maryland Youth Ballet and Houston Ballet Academy. She danced with Tulsa Ballet and Cincinnati Ballet, and has performed principal roles in works by Victoria Morgan, John Cranko, André Prokovsky, Derek Dean, Balanchine, and Septime Weber, among others. Minori joined BalletX in 2024.



### DANCER **BEN SCHWARZ**

trained at Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet and The School of American Ballet. He has originated roles in works by Alysa Spires, Norbert De La Cruz III, Silas Farley, and Preston Chamblee, and performed in Balanchine classics such as *Western Symphony* and *Bourrée Fantasque*. Ben joined BalletX in 2022.



### DANCER **ASHLEY SIMPSON**

studied at W. Dreyfoos High School of the Arts and Ailey/Fordham, where she graduated Magna Cum Laude and as a Denise Jefferson Scholar. She is a Princess Grace Honoraria winner and has been featured in Dance Magazine and Pointe Magazine. Ashley joined BalletX in 2020.



### DANCER **PETER WEIL**

trained at The Metropolitan Ballet Academy, Boston Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School, and Orlando Ballet. He danced with Philadelphia Ballet, where he performed world premieres by Matthew Neenan, Helen Pickett, and Garrett Smith. Peter joined BalletX in 2023.

Learn more about BalletX's incredible company of world-class dancers. [EXPLORE HERE](#) →



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AT THE SUZANNE ROBERTS THEATRE



## ANNABELLE LOPEZ OCHOA'S THE LITTLE PRINCE



# 20 YEARS

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Christine Cox  
Artistic & Executive Director

ENTERTAINING AND BEAUTIFUL TO WATCH AND BEHOLD  
BRAD STREET REVIEW